



Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

SER-POL-33

Version 3.0

Date approved: 21 February 2017

Approved by: People and Places Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out how the Trust will respond to and safely manage reports of domestic violence and abuse. It provides a clear definition of what the Trust considers domestic violence and abuse to be.
- 1.2 The policy also outlines how the Trust will support Manchester City Council (MCC) and other partners in delivering its Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy.
- 1.3 This policy and the accompanying procedure provide staff with clear guidelines to follow when dealing with reports of domestic abuse, which reflect best practice. This ensures that there is a consistent approach and that all reports are treated as a priority.

2. Definition

- 2.1 In line with MCC's Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy, the Trust has adopted the extended definition of domestic abuse and domestic violence set out within Home Office guidance in March 2013:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional'

- 2.1.1 Controlling behaviour is defined as acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape or regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 2.1.2 Coercive behaviour is defined as acts of assault, threat, humiliation, intimidation or other abuse that are used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

- 2.2 In line with Home Office guidance, the Trust recognises that domestic abuse also includes culturally specific forms of harm which impact upon black and minority ethnic (BME) women. This can include, but is not limited to, forced marriage, dowry related abuse, honour crime and female genital mutilation.

3. Regulatory Requirements

- 3.1 The Trust operates to fulfil the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulatory Standards. The way we deal with domestic abuse forms part of our overall approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB), within the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.
- 3.2 Additionally, the Trust has a legal requirement placed upon it under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to respond to reports of domestic abuse as a member of the local community safety partnership. This policy ensures that this requirement is met.

4. Scope of this Policy

- 4.1 This policy covers tenants and residents living in Southway homes who are the victim or perpetrator of domestic violence and/or abuse.
- 4.2 The policy does not cover rehousing applicants who are victims of domestic violence or abuse. Our approach to rehousing applicants is set out within our Allocation Scheme.

5. The Trust's Approach

- 5.1 As a key neighbourhood management partner in Manchester, the Trust's approach to domestic violence and abuse is aligned with the five pledges made within MCC's Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy:
1. Preventing abuse
 2. Supporting people to seek help
 3. Managing safety
 4. Training and developing the workforce
 5. Adapting delivery models in response to changing need and demand
- 5.2 The Trust will ensure it has processes in place to be able to respond to, manage and resolve incidents of domestic violence and abuse. We will

provide support to victims, work in partnership with other agencies and where suitable take action against perpetrators.

- 5.3 The Trust will have well trained and competent staff in place to provide an effective service to victims of domestic abuse. We will respect confidentiality and only divulge information with the consent of the person concerned. The only exception to this would be if providing certain information is necessary to safeguard victims or their family.
- 5.4 A key part of the Trust's approach is that we will work in partnership with other agencies, including MCC, Greater Manchester Police, and specialist agencies such as Women's Aid and Saheli.
- 5.5 The Trust acknowledges that its partners and other agencies may be better placed to resolve certain types of domestic violence and abuse (in particular those referred to at 2.2), and in these particular cases the Trust will signpost people to the most appropriate agency.

Pledge 1: Preventing abuse

- 5.6 The Trust will publicise its approach to domestic violence and abuse. This will include promoting the support and assistance that can be offered to victims and the action that can be taken against perpetrators.
- 5.7 The Trust will work in partnership with relevant agencies on awareness raising campaigns and events targeting adults, children and young people.

Pledge 2: Supporting people to seek help

- 5.8 The Trust will ensure that domestic violence and abuse can be reported by a variety of methods, including in our office and in person to our staff. All reports of domestic violence and abuse will be treated as a priority; responded to within one working day and investigated sensitively and thoroughly.
- 5.9 During the initial investigation a risk assessment will be completed. This will determine any additional risk factors or safeguarding issues. An action plan will also be agreed with the victim. To do this we will identify the victim's wants and needs and, unless safeguarding issues arise, respect their wishes and decisions. Advice will be provided to the victim about safety planning.
- 5.10 All victims will be offered a referral to the most appropriate support agency, such as internal Community Support staff, Women's Aid, Early Help Hub, or

an Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor via the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) process.

- 5.11 Where victims are referred to MARAC, the Trust will actively participate in the process and ensure that all actions assigned to us are prioritised and completed.
- 5.12 If the victim wishes to stay in their current home, support will be provided to assist them. This could be through target hardening their property, using a sanctuary scheme or taking legal action against the perpetrator.
- 5.13 If the victim wishes to move, the Trust will work closely with partner agencies to assist in securing temporary or alternative accommodation through rehousing. If the victim wishes to be rehoused in the area they currently live in, this will only be allowed if there is sufficient legal protection in place to prevent further incidents occurring.

Pledge 3: Managing safety

- 5.14 The Trust will take appropriate action against the perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse, independently or in conjunction with the Police and other statutory agencies. This includes, but is not limited to, an injunction against the perpetrator, an application for possession of a perpetrator's property or placing a perpetrator on the Rehousing Review List.
- 5.15 Due to the complex and sensitive nature of domestic abuse cases, the decision to take legal action will be taken on a case by case basis. The type of action taken will be based on the circumstances of the victim and perpetrator, the wishes of the victim and the legal advice received.

Pledge 4: Training and developing the workforce

- 5.16 The Trust will ensure that we have sufficient staff in place so we can respond effectively to reports of domestic violence and abuse and take all necessary action. We will have a clear structure, which shows those staff members with responsibilities for responding to domestic abuse and those with responsibility for management of the service.
- 5.17 Staff directly involved in the delivery of the service will be provided with specialist domestic abuse training. This will ensure they are able to deal properly and sensitively with disclosures, and understand this policy and the related procedure.

Pledge 5: Adapting delivery models in response to changing need and demand

- 5.18 The Trust will ensure that cases and incidents are reviewed and monitored on a regular basis.
- 5.19 The Trust will ensure that relevant staff are aware of any developments in good practice, including outcomes and learning from publicised serious case reviews.

6. Performance Monitoring

- 6.1 The Trust will put in place robust monitoring methods to measure the effectiveness of this policy. A detailed procedure will be used by staff to support this.
- 6.2 The Trust will set targets regarding complaint responses, and measure how successful we are at resolving complaints for the victim. Lessons learnt will be used to improve performance.
- 6.3 Where an outcome has been achieved for a victim, they will be asked to provide satisfaction feedback about the way in which the case has been handled. Due to the sensitive nature of domestic violence and abuse cases, the appropriate method of seeking feedback may be different case by case.

7. Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to ensure that all appropriate actions are put in place to support those tenants who have protected characteristics. An EIA Action Plan has been developed and will be monitored.

8. Related Policy Documents

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure
- Tenancy Support Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Hate Crime Policy and Procedure
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Procedure
- Environmental Enforcement Policy and Procedure

- Single Equality Scheme
- Manchester Allocation Scheme
- Southway Tenancy Agreement

POLICY REVIEW HISTORY	
<i>To be completed during each review</i>	
Previous versions (version number – approved by – approval date – title if different) v1 – Shadow Board – 17/07/2007 (later incorporated into the ASB Policy) v2 – Board – 18/03/2014 – Domestic Abuse Policy	
Date of last EIA:	February 2017
Review lead by:	Tom Austin, Community Action Manager
Main points or amendments made and reasons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines Domestic Abuse • States our regulatory requirements • Sets out how we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prevent Domestic Abuse ○ Manage Incidents of Domestic Abuse ○ Work in Partnership ○ Take Action against Perpetrators 	
Next review due:	Q4 2019/20
Review Level:	People and Places Committee